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HD **Flygskam: Sweden's 'flight shame' movement turns away from air travel in the personal fight against climate change; Is air travel ethical in the age of climate crisis? Jeremy Freed looks at the Swedish plane-free movement that is taking off**

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Flygskam may sound like a cute IKEA sofa or the comfy successor to "hygge," the Scandinavian coziness trend, but in fact it's much less fun.

Translated as "flight shame," flygskam is a Swedish word to describe the the guilt Swedes increasingly feel about the impact of their air travel on climate change. A hashtag, #jagstannarpamarken (which translates to #Istayontheground) emerged recently, while a related Facebook group dedicated to celebrating train journeys over air travel now has 90,000 members.

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But for Bjorn Ferry, the movement's instigator and figurehead, flygskam is more than just a hashtag; it's about ensuring the very survival of our species. "If we are to sustain human life in the future, becoming a fossil-fuel-free society is something we all have to aspire to," says the Swedish Olympian, television host and environmental advocate, who has personally pledged to become entirely fossil-fuel-free by 2025, beginning with a boycott on air travel.

Statistics now show that his fellow Swedes, among the most enthusiastic air travellers in Europe, are getting on board, taking the train more and flying less. "It's a great challenge, but no sacrifice," says Heidi Andersson, Ferry's wife and fellow climate activist of their commitment. "If normal people grab the initiative, the politicians will have to follow."

Ferry and Andersson's approach may sound extreme, but so, they argue, is the reality of the climate crisis. According to the goals set by the Paris Agreement, keeping global temperature rise below two degrees celsius will require limiting carbon dioxide emissions to less than two tons per person per year. When you take into account that the average Canadian produces 22 tonnes of greenhouse gases – nearly three times the average for G20 nations – the scale of the challenge becomes clear. Air travel is high on the list of ways individuals can reduce their emissions: a return flight from London to New York produces nearly two tonnes of CO2 for each person and choosing not to take that trip could be equivalent to powering your home entirely with renewable energy for a year.

"Once one knows how serious our climate predicament is, it's hard to take a flight and not feel moral qualms," Tom Green, climate solutions policy analyst at the David Suzuki Foundation, says. "My flight lasts a few hours, but my emissions will be warming the earth and contributing to climate havoc for decades."

While people around the world are increasingly aware that we need to cut our carbon emissions, curbing our addiction to air travel will be no small feat. In 2017, Green says, Canadians flew more than 155 billion

kilometres – equivalent to sending 200,000 people to the moon and back – while globally 38 million more people took to the skies in 2018 over the previous year. Thanks to ever-more-affordable airfares, this number is steadily increasing. At current rates of growth, the number of airplanes in the sky is predicted to more than double by 2050 and account for 22 per cent of the world's total carbon emissions.

It is, however, one thing to feel a twinge of flygskam while en route to Miami for a long weekend and quite another to find an enticing alternative. While Europe's extensive passenger rail network provides a far more carbon-friendly alternative to flying, such is not the case in Canada.

"In Europe distances tend to be shorter and populations more dense," says Marie-Anna Murat, senior director, corporate communications for VIA Rail.

But while a business trip from Toronto to Calgary by train may never be feasible due to the distances involved, travelling by rail within the Quebec City-Windsor corridor is much more so. Trips along this densely populated route could become even quicker still, thanks to federal funding in the 2018 budget which allowed VIA to upgrade its fleet and continue developing a plan for high-frequency rail. "Together, these projects could change the face of intercity travel in Canada," Murat says.

High-speed rail is a boon for both travellers and their carbon footprints, but it's hardly a comprehensive solution. In Vancouver, Harbour Air, which operates between regional seaports in the Pacific Northwest, aims to ease passengers' flygskam by converting its fleet of seaplanes to battery power, with test flights beginning this year. Jetblue, in the United States, has announced similar plans to create a fleet of hybrid-electric planes that would service regional airports across the United States as early as 2022. This is all good news, but widespread change might still be decades away.

"It is good to have these conversations and to consider what aspects of our lifestyles are undermining the things we care about," says Tom Green, acknowledging the scope and complexity of the challenge. It's a uniquely 21st-century conundrum: Now that we can fly wherever we want, the choice becomes not where to go next, but whether we should go at all.

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